BRITISH COLUMBIA
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BCStats

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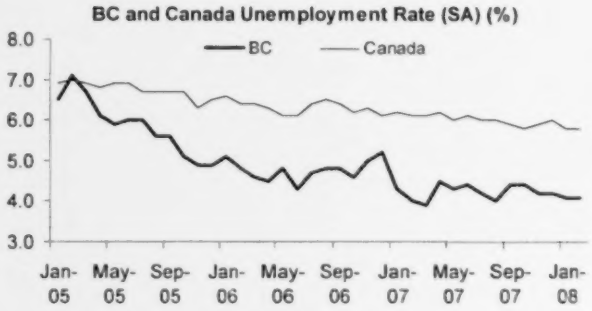
Current Statistics ◆ March 2008

- **British Columbia's jobless rate remained unchanged at 4.1% in February.** The lack of change in the unemployment rate was due to a marginal shrinking in the labour force offsetting a similarly small increase in employment. While there were slight gains in employment, there were significant job losses (-2.1%) among the self-employed. This was the third consecutive month where the number of self-employed workers fell.

  British Columbia and Saskatchewan had the second lowest unemployment in Canada at 4.1%. Only Alberta had a lower unemployment rate at 3.5%. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Employment in BC's goods sector dropped 2.0% in February as manufacturing once more shed jobs from its workforce (-4.5%).** Other goods industries such as agriculture (-11.1%), forestry, fishing & mining (-2.4%) and utilities (-1.4%) also employed fewer workers. However, construction, the goods sector's largest employer, expanded its workforce in February, adding 2.2% more jobs.

  The province's service sector recorded a second straight month of solid growth (+0.5%) despite the fact that nearly half of the industries in the sector reduced the size of their workforces. Employment in retail & wholesale trade, the sector's largest employer, increased 1.1%. Gains were also made in the public administration (+7.0%), accommodation & food services (+5.2%) and finance, insurance & real estate (+1.9%) industries. The educational services (-6.0%) and health care & social assistance (-2.2%) industries, on the other hand, employed fewer workers in February. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*



- **BC product exports began to recover (+3.0% *seasonally adjusted*) in January, following a 10.2% slide in the last month of 2007.** The value of forest (-5.7%) and agriculture & fishing (-2.9%) products shipped from the province were down, but energy exports rebounded 29.1%.

  Exports to the US were up 3.0%, as shipments of industrial & consumer (+1.7%) and machinery & equipment (+4.1%) products south of the border increased. Together, these accounted for about 40% of total US-bound exports. Overseas markets (+3.0%) started the year on a similarly strong note. *Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats*

- **Housing starts in the province surged ahead in February, rising 39.1% (*seasonally adjusted*) on the heels of a strong gain (+14.7%) at the beginning of the year.** Starts in urban areas were up 45.2%, largely due to a continued building boom in multiple-unit dwellings (+70.6%). Starts of single-detached dwellings were down 10.5% in February. Nearly two-thirds of the new housing starts in the province were in the Vancouver CMA, where starts advanced 70.9%, as the number of new multiple-unit building projects nearly doubled (+94.2%).

  Data Source: CMHC

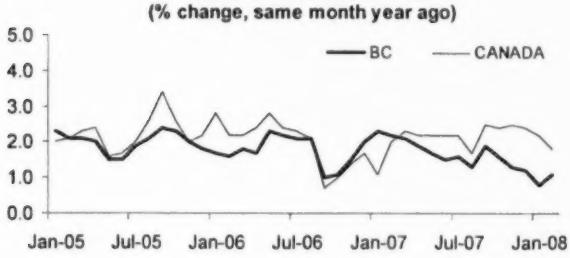
2008-03503/

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities decreased sharply (-22.4% *seasonally adjusted*) in January, reversing a 16.7% climb in December.** The value of permits eased in Kelowna (-26.7%) and was also lower in Vancouver (-26.1%), where most building activity occurs. On the other hand, building intentions in Abbotsford (+57.4%) and Victoria (+64.1%) were notably higher. Nationally, permits fell 2.9% in January. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's year-over-year inflation rate rose to 1.1% in February, yet remained the lowest among the provinces in the country.** Energy prices surged 5.5% due to double-digit increases in the cost of gasoline (+15.0%) and fuel oil & other fuel (+11.3%) providing much of the momentum for the rise in the overall price level. Excluding energy, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for BC was 0.6%.

  The cost of shelter rose 2.5% primarily as prices for owned accommodations (+3.2%), specifically home owner insurance (+3.8%) leaped higher. Operating an automobile (+1.6%) became more costly in February largely due to an increase in prices at the pump (+11.3%). While consumers paid slightly less for groceries (-0.2%), "eating out" took a bigger bite of the household budget (+2.1%). Prices for clothing fell 4.8% while alcoholic beverages & tobacco rose 1.4%.

BC and Canada Inflation Trend
(% change, same month year ago)



  Inflation rates were on the rise in BC's two major urban centres. In Vancouver, inflation inched 0.2 percentage points higher to 1.3%. Meanwhile, in Victoria, consumers faced a lower increase in prices (+0.5%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Shipments of goods manufactured in British Columbia slipped 0.4% (*seasonally adjusted*) in January, adding to the 2.2% drop in the previous month.** Durable goods producers saw shipments rise (+1.5%) as sales by both the fabricated (+7.3%) and machinery (+4.4%) industries served to offset declines by primary metal (-3.8%) and wood (-0.4%) producers.

  Non-durable shipments fared less well as sales by manufacturers of paper products (-7.2%) and food (-5.5%) dropped sharply in January. This was only partly offset by a pair of double-digit increases in sales in the plastics & rubber (+16.7%) and chemical (+12.2%) industries. Overall, shipments of non-durable goods declined 2.7%.

  While New Brunswick (-5.6%), Manitoba (-0.8%) and British Columbia (-0.4%) saw sales slump, Canadian manufacturers saw a 1.3% lift in shipments. Overall, 16 of 21 industries, from producers of both durable (+1.8%) and non-durable (+0.8%) goods, posted increases in January. Ontario (+2.0%) and Quebec (+1.2%) provided almost all (97%) of the $633 million increase in manufacturing sales.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **British Columbia's wholesalers saw sales in the province rise 1.4% (*seasonally adjusted*) to $4.3 billion in January.** Increased demand for motor vehicles (+6.9%) and building materials (+3.4%) offset declines in sales of machinery & equipment (-4.5%), lumber & millwork products (-2.7%) and food products (-1.4%). Nationally, sales improved in every province, pushing the national average 2.6% higher in January.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Sales by retailers in the province dropped marginally (-0.2%, *seasonally adjusted*) in January, after a 1.2% increase in December.** BC was the only province to post a decline in January. Nationally, sales increased 1.5%.
  Data Source: Statistics Canada

MONTHLY STATISTICS

	UNITS	REFERENCE PERIOD	CURRENT			MONTHLY AVERAGE YEAR-TO-DATE	
			LATEST MONTH	% CHANGE FROM LAST MONTH	% CHANGE FROM YEAR AGO	AMOUNT	% CHANGE FROM YEAR AGO
PRICES							
Consumer Price Index-BC	2002=100	Feb '08	110.3	0.4	1.1	110.1	1.0
Consumer Price Index-Vancouver	2002=100	Feb '08	110.7	0.5	1.3	110.5	1.2
Consumer Price Index-Victoria	2002=100	Feb '08	109.8	0.4	0.5	109.6	0.4
Consumer Price Index-Canada	2002=100	Feb '08	112.2	0.4	1.8	112.0	2.0
Consumer Price Index-USA	1982-84=100	Feb '08	211.7	0.3	4.0	211.4	4.2
Industry Price Index-Canada	1997=100	Jan '08	115.4	0.9	-0.1	115.4	-0.1
LABOUR							
Unemployment Rate (SA)*-BC	Percent	Feb '08	4.1	(4.1)	(4.0)	4.1	(4.2)
Unemployment Rate (SA)-Canada	Percent	Feb '08	5.8	(5.8)	(6.1)	5.8	(6.2)
Unemployment Rate (SA)-USA	Percent	Feb '08	4.8	(4.9)	(4.5)	4.9	(4.6)
Unemployed (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '08	99.3	1.6	4.9	98.5	1.0
Employed (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '08	2,303.2	-0.1	2.3	2,304.2	2.3
Labour Force (SA)-BC	Thousand	Feb '08	2,402.5	0.0	2.4	2,402.7	2.3
Participation Rate (SA)-BC	Percent	Feb '08	66.5	(66.6)	(66.1)	66.6	(66.3)
Regular EI Benefits Paid	$Million	Jan '08	76.9	13.1	-10.5	76.9	-10.5
Regular EI Beneficiaries	Persons	Jan '08	51,920	18.0	-3.5	51,920	-3.5
Average Weekly Wage Rate-BC	Dollars	Feb '08	766.55	-0.7	3.1	769.12	3.5
Wages and Salaries-BC (SA)	$Million	Dec '07	7,409.0	0.6	7.9	7,157.6	6.3
Fixed-Weighted Earnings Index-BC	1996=100	Dec '07	127.6	0.8	3.5	124.5	3.7
PRODUCTION - BC							
Lumber-Cubic Metres	Thousand	Dec '07	2,147.1	-17.0	-19.4	3,056.4	-10.7
Market Pulp Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '08	351	-11.6	-15.4	351	-15.4
Newsprint Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '08	50	-7.4	-32.4	50	-32.4
Other Paper Shipments-Tonnes	Thousand	Jan '08	169	5.6	5.0	169	5.0
Coal-Tonnes	Thousand	Dec '07	1,887.0	-16.7	3.0	2,161.7	12.0
Oil-Cubic Metres	Thousand	Nov '07	114.7	-5.6	-12.2	128.2	-7.9
Natural Gas-Cubic Metres	Million	Mar '07	2,814.2	8.9	-3.5	2,727.4	-3.5
Electric Power Generated	GW.h	Dec '07	6,829.2	9.7	6.0	5,985.0	15.8
Manufacturing Shipments (SA)	$Million	Jan '08	3,370.2	-0.4	-7.4	3,370.2	-7.4
GENERAL							
Housing Starts-All Areas BC(SAAR)**	Thousand	Feb '08	54.1	39.1	59.1	46.5	23.8
Housing Starts-USA (SAAR)**	Thousand	Feb '08	1,065.0	-0.6	-28.4	1,068.0	-26.1
Building Permits-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '08	815.3	-22.4	-22.5	815.3	-22.5
Residential-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '08	653.0	-11.5	-9.0	653.0	-9.0
Non-Residential-BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '08	162.3	-48.0	-51.4	162.3	-51.4
Retail Sales (NAICS) (SA)-BC	$Million	Jan '08	4,811.0	-0.2	5.9	4,811.0	5.9
Wholesale Trade (NAICS) (SA)-BC	$Million	Jan '08	4,319.1	1.4	-0.5	4,319.1	-0.5
Tourism Room Revenues (SA)-BC	$Thousand	Nov '07	168,017	0.3	5.7	163,731	8.1
Business Bankruptcies-BC	Number	Dec '07	38	-17.4	2.7	39	-19.9
Consumer Bankruptcies-BC	Number	Jan '08	506	5.4	-8.2	506	-8.2
Incorporations-BC	Number	Feb '08	2,502	0.4	-0.7	2,497	-1.1
Exports Originating in BC (SA)	$Million	Jan '08	2,339.4	3.0	-16.6	2,339.4	-16.6

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*SA indicates seasonal adjustment.

**SAAR indicates seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

Brackets () indicate that rates are shown instead of percentage changes.

ANNUAL STATISTICS

	UNITS	YEAR				PERCENT CHANGE		
		2007	2006	2005	2004	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
PRICES								
Consumer Price Index-BC	2002=100	110.0	108.1	106.3	104.2	1.8	1.7	2.0
Consumer Price Index-Vancouver	2002=100	110.2	108.0	106.0	104.0	2.0	1.9	1.9
Consumer Price Index-Victoria	2002=100	109.8	108.5	106.9	104.6	1.2	1.5	2.2
Consumer Price Index-Canada	2002=100	111.5	109.1	107.0	104.7	2.2	2.0	2.2
Consumer Price Index-USA*	1982-84=100	207.3	201.6	195.3	188.9	2.9	3.2	3.4
Industry Price Index-Canada*	1997=100	115.6	113.8	111.2	109.5	1.6	2.3	1.6
LABOUR								
Unemployment Rate-BC	Percent	4.2	4.8	5.9	7.2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unemployment Rate-Canada	Percent	6.0	6.3	6.8	7.2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unemployment Rate-USA*	Percent	4.6	4.6	5.1	5.5	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unemployed-BC	Thousand	100.0	109.6	132.9	159.2	-8.8	-17.5	-16.5
Employed-BC	Thousand	2,266.3	2,195.5	2,130.5	2,062.7	3.2	3.1	3.3
Labour Force-BC	Thousand	2,366.4	2,305.1	2,263.4	2,221.9	2.7	1.8	1.9
Participation Rate-BC	Percent	66.3	65.7	65.6	65.5	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total EI Benefits Paid-BC*	$Million	1,561.6	1,564.2	1,650.3	1,764.0	-0.2	-5.2	-6.4
Regular EI Benefits Paid-BC*	$Million	694.3	723.7	837.4	960.4	-4.1	-13.6	-12.8
Average Weekly Wage Rate-BC	Dollars	747.84	726.02	704.49	686.74	3.0	3.1	2.6
Wages and Salaries-BC*	$Million	85,891.6	80,805.2	74,448.5	69,383.5		8.5	7.3
Fixed-Weighted Earnings Index-BC*	1996=100	124.5	120.0	116.2	113.3	3.8	3.3	2.6
PRODUCTION - BC								
Lumber-Cubic Metres*	Thousand	36,677.3	41,050.7	41,012.9	39,879.3	-10.7	0.1	2.8
Market Pulp Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	4,717	4,736	4,932	4,724	-0.4	-4.0	4.4
Newsprint Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	846	1,059	1,076	1,135	-20.1	-1.6	-5.2
Other Paper Shipments-Tonnes*	Thousand	1,917	1,960	1,877	1,841	-2.2	4.4	2.0
Coal-Tonnes*	Thousand	25,940.0	23,161.0	26,718.0	27,313.0	12.0	-13.3	-2.2
Oil-Cubic Metres*	Thousand	-	1,670.6	1,765.7	2,019.0		-5.4	-12.5
Natural Gas-Cubic Metres*	Million	-	35,291.7	31,892.8	31,201.3		10.7	2.2
Electric Power Generated*	GW.h	71,820.2	62,021.4	67,811.2	60,495.6	15.8	-8.5	12.1
Solid Mineral Shipments	$Million	5,671.6	5,990.6	4,924.8	3,674.5	-5.3	21.6	34.0
Farm Cash Receipts**	$Million	2,362.2	2,333.2	2,405.2	2,403.1	1.2	-3.0	0.1
Manufacturing Shipments*	$Million	43,162.9	44,552.5	43,212.5	42,146.9	-3.1	3.1	2.5
GENERAL								
Housing Starts-All Areas BC**	Thousand	39.2	36.4	34.7	32.9	7.6	5.1	5.3
Housing Starts-USA	Thousand	1,355.0	1,800.9	2,068.3	1,955.8	-24.8	-12.9	5.8
Building Permits-BC*	$Million	12,544.7	11,541.5	10,182.9	7,938.7	8.7	13.3	28.3
Residential-BC*	$Million	8,611.7	7,620.7	6,970.8	5,868.9	13.0	9.3	18.8
Non-Residential-BC*	$Million	3,933.0	3,920.8	3,212.1	2,069.8	0.3	22.1	55.2
Retail Sales (NAICS)-BC*	$Million	56,396.2	52,626.9	49,286.3	47,216.6	7.2	6.8	4.4
Wholesale Trade (NAICS)-BC*	$Million	53,402.9	50,724.8	47,277.0	43,497.7	5.3	7.3	8.7
Tourism Room Revenues-BC*	$Thousand	-	1,822.2	1,690.1	1,592.2		7.8	6.2
Business Bankruptcies-BC	Number	470	587	786	922	-19.9	-25.3	-14.8
Consumer Bankruptcies-BC	Number	6,650	7,021	8,173	8,378	-5.3	-14.1	-2.4
Incorporations-BC*	Number	30,841	30,667	28,593	25,428	0.6	7.3	12.4
Exports Originating in BC*	$Million	31,459.5	33,468.2	34,167.3	31,007.8	-6.0	-2.0	10.2
Capital Expenditures-BC	$Million	42,086.1	39,912.2	33,254.2	29,664.7	5.4	20.0	12.1
Population-BC (as of July 1)	Thousands of Persons	4,380,256	4,320,255	4,260,246	4,203,807	1.4	1.4	1.3

* derived from monthly figures

**derived from quarterly figures

- indicates not yet available

n/a = not applicable

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ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

	YEAR				PERCENT CHANGE		
	2007	2006	2005	2004	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05
BRITISH COLUMBIA (Millions $Cdn)							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	na	180,328	169,404	157,365	-	6.4	7.7
Real Gross Domestic Product **(chained 2002 $)**	na	158,335	153,208	146,629	-	3.3	4.5
CANADA (Millions $Cdn)							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	na	1,446,307	1,375,080	1,290,828	-	5.2	6.5
Real GDP at Market Prices **(chained 2002 $)**	na	1,282,204	1,247,780	1,210,656	-	2.8	3.1
UNITED STATES (Billions $US) **							
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices	13,841.3	13,194.7	12,433.9	11,685.9	4.9	6.1	6.4
Real GDP at Market Prices (chained 2000 $US)	11,566.8	11,319.4	11,003.4	10,675.8	2.2	2.9	3.1

*** US Department of Commerce (actual)*

INTEREST AND EXCHANGE RATES

(Source: Bank of Canada)

	Mar. 26/08	Mar. 19/08	Feb. 27/08	Mar. 28/07
	PERCENT PER ANNUM			
CANADA				
Prime Business Rate	5.25	5.25	5.75	6.00
Bank Rate	3.75	3.75	4.25	4.50
Marketable Government Bond Rate (over 10 years)	3.91	3.89	4.14	4.21
Conventional Mortgages - 1 Year	7.15	7.25	7.25	6.40
- 5 Years	7.19	7.29	7.29	6.49
UNITED STATES				
Prime Rate	5.25	5.25	6.00	8.25
EXCHANGE RATES	AVERAGE NOON SPOT RATE			
US Dollar	1.0180	1.0028	0.9778	1.1580
Japanese Yen	0.0103	0.0101	0.0092	0.0099
British Pound	2.0377	1.9913	1.9480	2.2707
Euro	1.6044	1.5685	1.4795	1.5438

FORECASTS

	Real Gross Domestic Product			Unemployment Rate		Consumer Price Index	
	2007	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009
	% Change	% Change	% Change	%	%	% Change	% Change
BRITISH COLUMBIA							
BC Government (February 2008, Budget)	3.0	2.4	2.8	4.7	4.8	1.8	2.1
Credit Union Central BC (February 2008)	3.2	3.0	3.0	4.1	4.2	2.2	2.3
Conference Board of Canada (February 5, 2008)	2.9	3.1	3.0	4.2	4.2	na	na
Scotia Bank Group (March 13, 2008)	3.0	2.6	3.1	4.0	4.1	na	na
TD Bank (January 10, 2008)	3.2	2.8	3.2	4.3	4.2	1.7	2.3
CIBC WM Economics (October 26, 2007)	3.3	3.3	na	4.2	na	2.2	na
Global Insight (January 2008)	3.1	2.9	3.0	4.2	4.5	2.1	2.2
CANADA							
TD Bank (March 19, 2008)	2.7	1.1	1.8	6.0	6.3	1.5	1.9
CIBC WM Economics (February 21, 2008)	2.5	2.0	na	6.1	na	2.3	na
Global Insight (March 2008)	2.7	1.6	2.3	6.1	6.2	1.7	2.0
UNITED STATES							
TD Bank (March 19, 2008)	-	1.1	1.1	5.3	6.7	3.8	2.3
CIBC WM Economics (February 21, 2008)	-	1.6	na	5.2	na	4.0	na
Global Insight (March 2008)	-	1.2	2.0	5.4	5.8	3.3	1.4

na: not available